DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 612 SP 021 503

AUTHOR Wood, Fred H.; Johnson, Gil
TITLE Staff Development and the /I/D/E/A/ School Improvement Project.
INSTITUTION Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Dayton, Ohio.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Involvement; Educational Change; Educational Environment; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Improvement Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Program Development; School Effectiveness; *Staff Development; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *IDEA Model; *RPTIM Model

ABSTRACT

The Institute for Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/) School Improvement Program (SIP) is based upon a school-based approach to staff development and school improvement program known as the Readiness, Planning, Training, Implementation, and Maintenance (RPTIM) Model. There are five stages to the RPTIM Model: (1) readiness, dealing with issues of school climate, developing group norms and group expectations, and goals for improvement; (2) planning, developing specific plans for conducting professional development activities required to achieve goals; (3) training, the stage where the staff development plans are implemented; (4) implementation, the stage in which new knowledge and skills learned in inservice training are installed into everyday practice; and (5) maintenance, behaviors installed in daily practice are monitored to assure that they continue to be used. These stages are defined by a total of 38 model practices which identify the specific tasks that are to be completed in each stage and the persons who are responsible for making key decisions. Schools that participate in the SIP involve parents, teachers, administrators, students, and interested community members in the five-stage RPTIM cycle. Results of informal evaluation studies from SIP schools, in their second or third year of implementation, are presented. Information is provided on how /I/D/E/A/ works with schools and districts, its cost, and the name of the contact person for the project. Appendix A outlines the 38 RPTIM Model Practices, and Appendix B presents a list of nine principal objectives on which programs are designed for SIP sites. (JD)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND THE /I/D/E/A/ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Fred H. Wood

Gil Johnson

Dayton, Ohio

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND THE /I/D/E/A/ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Those of us concerned with improving schools and staff development need to stop talking about what is wrong with schools and inservice education. For the last decade or so we have been fixated on the problems we face and the inadequacies in our training programs. We have spent too much time on principles and practices that we hoped/wished would improve current practice in our schools.

It's time, we believe, to move from wishful feelings and conventional wisdom to a more productive approach to improving schooling for students and for thinking about how to increase the effectiveness of staff development to achieve this end. We need to examine and use what we know from research and documented best practice about what we should be doing. Research findings and the literature describing effective practice that has accumulated over the last 30 years in the areas of educational change, educational leadership, organizational development, adult learning, school climate, and, of course, staff development provide us with a great deal of information that is helpful (Thompson, 1982). More recently, the research on effective schools and effective classrooms by Edmonds, (1979) and Rosenshine (1982) has reinforced and extended what has been available to us in the research literature for a long time. In fact, we know a great deal from research about what can be done to improve the effectiveness of schooling and to improve staff development practices that support the improvement of current practice.

Some of the more significant things we know that relate to school improvement and effective staff development include:

1. We know that the primary unit of change in education is the school, not the school district.

2. We know that significant change takes considerable time, usually 4-5 years.

3. We know that the principal is the key to what will or will not happen in a school; he or she is the gate-keeper.

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4. We know that faculty commitment to changing the way they currently carry out their professional responsibilities is important to obtaining and maintaining significant changes in school practice.

5. We know that adults are motivated to learn when they control and are responsible for their own learning.

6. We know that a healthy school climate is a prerequisite for significant improvement in schools--a healthy climate suggests the need for trusting relationships, open communications and peer support in the schools.

7. We know some specific practices that will result in increased achievement in schools.

8. And, finally, we do know the practices which will improve effectiveness of both staff development and schooling.

In the remainder of this paper, we will share one approach to school improvement--the /I/D/E/A/ School Improvement Project (SIP)--that is based upon those things "we know" about school improvement and effective staff development. SIP is based upon the staff development model reported in the 1981 ASCD Yearbook, Organizational Development/Staff Development (Wood, Thompson, Russell, 1981). Before describing the school improvement process and the impact of that process on schools in Indiana, we will briefly review the RPTIM Model.

The Basis for the Training Program

The model from which the /I/D/E/A/ training program was derived is based upon research on school change, organizational development, school climate, adult learning, inservice education and other areas related to professional staff development (Thompson, 1982). This model presents a school-based approach to staff development and school improvement. It assumes that staff development is something needed by all educators and requires considerable time. It views participants of inservice as adult learners who want to improve in their job competence, need some control over their learning, vary widely in their professional competencies and readiness to learn, and need a commitment to change their behavior before they will learn. A supportive principal and a positive school climate are also seen as essential to successful staff development as defined by this model (Wood, Thompson, Russell, 1981).

The RPTIM Model consists of five stages: Readiness, Planning, Training, Implementation and Maintenance (RPTIM).

> "The **Readiness Stage** emphasizes selection and understanding of and commitment to new professional behaviors by a school staff. It deals with issues of school climate, developing group norms and group expectations, and goals for improvement.
>
> The **Planning Stage** focuses on developing specific plans for conducting professional development activities required to achieve the goals for improvement set in the Readiness Stage.
>
> The **Training Stage** is the stage where the staff development plans are implemented. The practices here respond very directly to what we know about adult learners and adult learning.
>
> The fourth stage, **Implementation**, is the stage in which new knowledge and skills learned in the inservice training are installed into the everyday work setting. It is the transition from the learning into practice.
>
> The **Maintenance Stage**, stage five, is where the professional behaviors that are installed in the daily practice are monitored to assure that they continue to be used in the schools, and are implemented at a high level of performance." (Wood, McQuarrie, Thompson, 1982).

These stages are defined by a total of 38 practices which identify the specific tasks that are to be completed in each stage and the persons who are responsible for making key decisions. These practices also identify the tasks that staff development personnel need to be able to perform as they work with others to plan and implement inservice programs.

The 38 practices which define the five stages in the RPTIM Model are reported at the end of this paper (Appendix A). A careful reading of them provides you with a more complete understanding of what occurs in each of the five stages. For an in depth description of the RPTIM Model, we would suggest you read the fourth chapter in the 1981 ASCD Yearbook.

As noted earlier, each of these practices has a research base in the literature (Thompson, 1981). In addition, both the regular membership of the National Staff

Development Council and the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision have indicated that these practices should serve as the basis for effective staff development in schools. A national study conducted in the spring of 1981 showed that these two expert groups of practitioners and professors strongly supported the use of the 38 practices when professional development programs are planned for educational personnel (Wood, McQuarrie, Thompson, 1982).

School Improvement Project

The School Improvement Project (SIP), which mirrors the RPTIM Model, is a systematic, practical approach to achieving excellence in schools. This approach to improving practice in schools is the culmination of more than two decades of research and experience in educational improvement of the Lilly Endowment and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. It is a response to a number of critical needs now facing educators who seek to improve schooling in the United States. These needs include such things as:

1. the need to develop and remain committed to a vision of what our schools should become;

2. the need to build school improvement through sustained, long-term efforts;

3. the need to identify and retain that which is valuable and effective in schools and should not be discarded in the name of change for change's sake;

4. the need for active involvement of students, parents, community, and all school staff members in school improvement efforts; and finally,

5. the need for schools and their communities to achieve excellence through positive relationships characterized by mutual support, constructive response to varied needs, and interdependence.

Schools that participate in the School Improvement Project involve parents, teachers, administrators, students, and interested community members in a five-stage cycle for school improvement: readiness, planning, training, implementing, and maintaining.

Readiness. In the first stage, a planning team is formed including members of the groups comprising the school community such as teachers, students, administrators, parents, community and industrial leaders and school board members. This planning group attends a series of awareness meetings to: (a) develop an awareness of what schooling could be--a vision of what we want our school to become in five years, and (b) to access the school's readiness to change by gathering information about such conditions as the use of effective communications skills, the climate of trust, willingness to take appropriate risks, and a commitment to mutual support.

Planning. Once this tentative long-range vision has been described and the planning team has internalized and is practicing the skills that make groups effective, the team participates in a retreat. At the retreat the planning team refines its vision of the school by devising outcomes or objectives that describe how the school would appear or operate in each of the nine areas of school improvement. Planning team members then compare practice in their school with their idealized vision to identify and celebrate present successes and to identify areas in need of change.

Following the retreat, a design task group is formed to prepare detailed plans for initial improvement steps. Obviously, there is no magic implementation scheme that will enable a school to attain all its goals at once. Rather it is the task of the design group to develop a first-year plan by identifying those desired outcomes that are primary or enabling of future improvement. The first-year plan also includes the practices that, when implemented, lead to attainment of the primary goals. The task group then reports its proposed plan to the planning team members who help to finalize and then accept the first-year plan. The planning team also decides how to communicate the plan to all those who would be affected by its implementation.

The final tasks of the planning stage are to identify participants, plan needed inservice training, and determine the coordinating and governing structures that will be needed to support the planned innovations.

Training. New knowledge, attitudes, and skills are needed to implement new practices. The School Improvement Project emphasizes the use of clinical or experiential staff training to develop these learnings among participants. A key to successful staff development is the continuing commitment to the vision of schooling developed by the planning group.

Implementation and Maintenance. As the first-year plan begins to be implemented, the school's planning team begins a whole new series of steps to prepare the schools' second-year plan. Improvement becomes a continuous process characterized by ongoing goal identification, assessment of present practices, staff development, refining implementation, and expanding and refining the original vision that was developed during the retreat and design meetings during the planning stage.

Currently there are over 40 schools involved in the SIP process. These schools are located primarily in Indiana, since that is where the initial developmental work on this Project was done. However, projects are now underway in Detroit, New York, Washington, Oregon and Alberta, Canada. In addition, facilitators have been trained for perhaps another fifteen or twenty sites, internationally.

Involvement minimally means that facilitators have been trained and have initiated planning team activity for their school or schools. Other sites have had as much as three year's involvement in the program.

The Effects of School Improvement

A number of informal evaluation studies have been conducted by schools in the SIP who are in their second and third year of implementation to determine the effects on staff, students, parents, community, etc. The results of these evaluations have been most promising. Here are a few of the indicators of improvements that have occurred in SIP schools.

1. In an inner-city high school, IOWA achievement scores have improved at every grade level and in every sub-test in one year.

2. In an urban school, percentage of students reading below the grade level was reduced from 84% to 58% in one year.

3. In a suburban school of over 2,500, the average daily attendance was increased to 98%.

4. In a rural school, the number of students voluntarily involved in clubs and extra-curricular activities has tripled over the three-year period.

5. In a suburban school, the number of high school dropouts has been reduced 55% over the last three years.

6. In a large urban high school, the number of discipline problems severe enough to necessitate expulsion have been dramatically reduced over the past three years until last year there was not a single incident of such gravity.

7. In a rural school, an in-house suspension program has been so effective that in two years not a single student has been referred a second time for remediation.

8. In one SIP school, staff absentees were reduced over 100 days compared to the previous year. (Most reductions occurred in fewer bereavement days.)

9. In an urban school, students voluntarily selected 1,450 more classes than the previous year equaling almost one additional course selection per student.

10. In a suburban school, vandalism was reduced from a three-year average of $15,000 per year to $500 year before last and last year to zero.

11. In an urban school, there was a 12% increase in daily attendance.

12. In a suburban middle school faced with first-year forced busing, a plan was instituted between school and home to increase student attention to homework. By second semester of this program, the number of students not completing homework was reduced to less than 1%.

13. In a suburban high school of 2,600 plus, there has not been a single disciplinary referral serious enough to necessitate a due-process expulsion in the last three years.

These indicators of improvement reflect a particular concern of each SIP school community. Many of these schools had desperate problems prior to becoming involved in the School Improvement, while others were already good schools and used the planning process to become a better school. Each school community used the SIP

planning process to create a vision of excellence or a plan to insure that program improvement was based on a clear set of indicators like those listed above.

How Does One Get Involved?

/I/D/E/A/ works with schools and districts in a variety of ways, perhaps best described by degree of /I/D/E/A/ involvement over time from little to much. At the end of the scale where /I/D/E/A/ is least involved, we will prepare a person to facilitate the School Improvement Program for a school or district through attendance at a series of clinical workshops, totaling 15 days over a period of a year and a half or less. The workshops follow the model just described to you and follow a natural sequence.

Workshop one is a four and a half day experience designed to prepare a facilitator to initiate the school improvement program and to conduct a series of site planning meetings.

Workshop two prepares the facilitator to conduct the retreat and design stages of the School Improvement Program--three days.

Workshop three covers the training and monitoring stages of school improvement and it lasts three days.

Workshop four deals with implementation, evaluation and recycling and lasts four and one half days.

/I/D/E/A/ charges $100 per day plus expenses for the training just described. The other extreme of involvement with /I/D/E/A/, for districts or cooperating schools numbering 10 or more is to contract for /I/D/E/A/ facilitation, in which case /I/D/E/A/works intimately with a district to bring about school improvement. The cost of this type of involvement varies with the services provided and the time required, but is cost effective for larger school systems interested in turn key kinds of improvement efforts. In any event, and in any of these contracted relationships,

/I/D/E/A/ is concerned that local capacity for sustained improvement be built and that dependence on /I/D/E/A/'s intimate involvement be as short lived as possible.

/I/D/E/A/ workshops are conducted on a needs basis and in geographically central locations relative to that need. If you would like to pursue training with us, contact either our Dayton or Indianapolis office and we will keep you informed of training opportunities.

As you perhaps know, /I/D/E/A/ in cooperation with Jim LaPlant of the University of Cincinnati, has a well developed and rather widely used Principals' Inservice Program. I mention this for two reasons--first, because it is an excellent program presently serving some 1,000 principals in some 100 colleague groups, facilitated by more than 90 /I/D/E/A/ trained facilitators, and second because one of the major thrusts of the Principals' Inservice Program is school improvement. That is, the two programs are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing. Information about participating in either is available from me or your packet.

Should you decide you want more information about /I/D/E/A/'s improvement programs, you may contact us at:

/I/D/E/A/
5335 Far Hills Avenue - Suite 300
Dayton, OH 45429

513/434-7300

APPENDIX A

RPTIM MODEL PRACTICES

Stage I: Readiness

1. A positive school climate is developed before other staff development efforts are attempted.

2. Goals for school improvement are written collaboratively by teachers, parents, building administrators, and central office administrators.

3. The school has a written list of goals for the improvement of school programs during the next three to five years.

4. The school staff adopts and supports goals for the improvement of school programs.

5. Current school practices are examined to determine which ones are congruent with the school's goals for improvement before staff development activities are planned.

6. Current educational practices not yet found in the school are examined to determine which ones are congruent with the school's goals for improvement before staff development activities are planned.

7. The school staff identifies specific plans to achieve the school's goals for improvement.

8. Leadership and support during the initial stage of staff development activity are the responsibility of the principal and central office staff.

Stage II: Planning

9. Differences between desired and actual practices in the school are examined to identify the inservice needs of the staff.

10. Planning of staff development activities relies, in part, upon information gathered directly from school staff members.

11. Inservice planners use information about the learning styles of participants when planning staff development activities.

12. Staff development programs include objectives for inservice activities covering as much as five years.

13. The resources available for use in staff development are identified prior to planning inservice activities.

14. Staff development programs include plans for activities to be conducted during the following three to five years.

Planning (continued):

15. Specific objectives are written for staff development activities.

16. Staff development objectives include objectives for attitude development (new outlooks and feelings).

17. Staff development objectives include objectives for increased knowledge (new information and understanding).

18. Staff development objectives include objectives for skill development (new work behaviors).

19. Leadership during the planning of inservice programs is shared among teachers and administrators.

Stage III: Training

20. Staff development activities include the use of learning teams in which two to seven participants share and discuss learning experiences.

21. Individual school staff members choose objectives for their own professional learning.

22. Individual school staff members choose the staff development activities in which they participate.

23. Staff development activities include experiential activities in which participants try out new behaviors and techniques.

24. Peers help to teach one another by serving as inservice leaders.

25. School principals participate in staff development activities with their staffs.

26. Leaders of staff development activities are selected according to their expertise rather than their position.

27. As participants in staff development activities become increasingly competent, leadership behavior becomes less directive or task-oriented.

28. As participants in staff development activities become increasingly confident in their abilities, the leader transfers increasing responsibility to the participants.

Stage IV: Implementation

29. After participating in inservice activities participants have access to support services to help implement new behaviors as part of their regular work.

30. School staff members who attempt to implement new learnings are recognized for their efforts.

Implementation (continued):

31. The leaders of staff development activities visit the job setting, when needed, to help the inservice participants refine or review previous learning.

32. School staff members use peer supervision to assist one another in implementing new work behaviors.

33. Resources are allocated to support the implementation of new practices following staff development activities (funds to purchase new instructional materials, time for planning, etc.).

34. The school principal actively supports efforts to implement changes in professional behavior.

Stage V: Maintenance

35. A systematic program of instructional supervision is used to monitor new work behavior.

36. School staff members utilize systematic techniques of self-monitoring to maintain new work behaviors.

37. Student feedback is used to monitor new practices.

38. Responsibility for the maintenance of new school practices is shared by both teachers and administrators.

Appendix B

NINE PRINCIPALS OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

(Forecast for the 1980's)

The following principles are based on our forecast of the 1980's. These principles point the direction for selection of practices and prescriptions on which programs are designed for our School Improvement sites.

1. Students become increasingly self-directed through planned activities leading to a self-educating adult role.

2. Parents become active participants in the education of their children by sharing in planning and accountability.

3. Each student voluntarily pursues excellence in some area of his or her own choosing.

4. Every participant in the act of educating youth--parents, teachers other students, out-of-school resource persons--is also a learner.

5. Everyone affected by a decision is involved in the making of it, has ownership of its intent and contributes to the synergy of management processes.

6. Leaders increasingly use education to anticipate and prepare for successful life transitions.

7. Leaders increasingly profit from the interdependence and integration of the educational efforts of home, school, and community, thus reducing redundancy while insuring depth and comprehensiveness of development.

8. Schools increasingly assume the important role of coordinator and linker of resources in an effort to increase the positive impact on students while reducing the direct role of the school.

9 School/community values are accepted as appropriate program objectives, with planned developmental activities included in classroom processes.

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